36th Night ◎ Bamboo Shoots

WHILE EATING SOME BAMBOO SHOOTS, THE DOCTOR SASAHARA-SENSEI ABSENT-MINDEDLY MURMURED...

EH!?

IN THE PAST, I USED TO BE A TAKENOKO-ZOKU*.

WELL, IT MAKES SENSE THAT A "BAMBOO SHOOT TRIBESMAN" WOULD GROW UP TO BE A "QUACK DOCTOR"*, RIGHT?

I'D NEVER HAVE GUESSED.

IT WAS BACK WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL...

T/N: LITERALLY, A "BUSH DOCTOR".

EXCUSE ME, BUT UH... WHAT'S THIS "TAKENOKO-ZOKU"?

NICE ONE, SHISHO.

I THINK IT WAS BACK AROUND 1979 TO 1980. THE TAKENOKO-ZOKU WERE GROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WOULD GATHER AT PEDESTRIAN MALLS IN SHINJUKU AND DANCE WHILE WEARING GAUDY OUTFITS.

YEAH.

KAWAMOTO-KUN, ARE YOU FOR REAL?

WELL, YOU SEE...

... AH, RIGHT. I GUESS A YOUNG GUY LIKE YOU WOULDN'T KNOW.

SOME GROUPS LIKE "FRIENDS", "ICHINICHI ICHIZEN*", AND "RYUUKO BUJIN"* BECAME QUITE FAMOUS. AT ITS PEAK, THERE WERE AROUND 50 GROUPS WITH 2000 MEMBERS IN TOTAL DANCING THERE.

OF COURSE. DURING A SCHOOL TRIP TO TOKYO, I WENT THERE TO SEE THEM.

YOU SURE ARE WELL-INFORMED.

AHA.

THE NUMBER OF SPECTATORS IT DREW WAS ALSO INCREDIBLE. YOU COULD BARELY EVEN MOVE THROUGH THE CROWD.

IT SURE WAS A BIG THING... IN FACT, I WAS KNOWN AS "MASASHI" OF "KYOUKI RANBU"*, AND I WAS PRETTY DAMN POPULAR.

MY FRIENDS AND I ACTUALLY BROUGHT ALONG OUR OWN OUTFITS, BUT THERE WERE SO MANY PEOPLE THAT WE COULDN'T JOIN IN.

T/N: CHIVALROUS WILD DANCE.

MASASHI, THE CHIVALROUS WILD DANCER...

BACK IN THE DAY WHEN I WAS SLIM, I WAS OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR HIRO-KUN (OKITA HIROYUKI).

WHAT? WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT!?

ARABIAN NIGHTS? HMM... YEAH, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

DID THE TAKENOKO-ZOKU INVOLVE BOTH MEN AND WOMEN PUTTING ON MAKEUP AND WEARING OUTFITS THAT LOOK LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS?

!

SO MOM WAS A TAKENOKO-ZOKU, HUH...?

THERE WAS A PICTURE LIKE THAT IN HER PHOTO ALBUM. FURTHERMORE... SOME YEARS BACK, SHE SUDDENLY BROKE INTO TEARS WHILE WATCHING THE NEWS. WHEN I ASKED HER WHY, SHE SAID IT WAS BECAUSE "HIRO-KUN DIED"...

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. SHE'S A TAKENOKO-ZOKU!

INCIDENTALLY, MY NAME ALSO HAPPENS TO BE HIROYUKI.

Okita Hiroyuki (Hiro-kun)
1963–1999
Former takenoko-zoku.
Idol and actor.

ONE WEEK LATER...

...AND THIS IS KAWAMOTO-KUN'S MOTHER!?

SO THIS IS THE INFAMOUS MASASHI OF KYOUKI RANBU...

Kyouki Ranbu

NO WAY, CALL ME "KAORU OF JE T'AIME"*.

T/N: PRONOUNCED LIKE THE FRENCH FOR "I LOVE YOU", BUT READ AS "SPELL EMPEROR DREAM".

NOPE, NOT AT ALL... THERE WERE LOADS OF US.

BY THE WAY, DO YOU KNOW EACH OTHER?

THAT REMINDS ME, HAVE A LOOK AT THIS.

BUT THE NAME "MASASHI OF KYOUKI RANBU" WAS QUITE WELL KNOWN.

I KNOW! NEXT TIME, WHY DON'T WE TRY GETTING THE GANG BACK TOGETHER?

THERE!!

WOW, IT'S THE REAL THING!

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!?

THEY WOULD TELL THEIR FORMER COMRADES ABOUT IT,

AND AS WORD SPREAD,

THEIR NUMBERS STEADILY INCREASED.

FROM THEN ON, FORMER TAKENOKO-ZOKU WOULD MEET UP HERE EVERY WEEK ON SATURDAY NIGHT.

ONE NIGHT, NO MATTER HOW MUCH STEWED BAMBOO SHOOTS I MADE, THERE SIMPLY WASN'T ENOUGH TO GO AROUND.

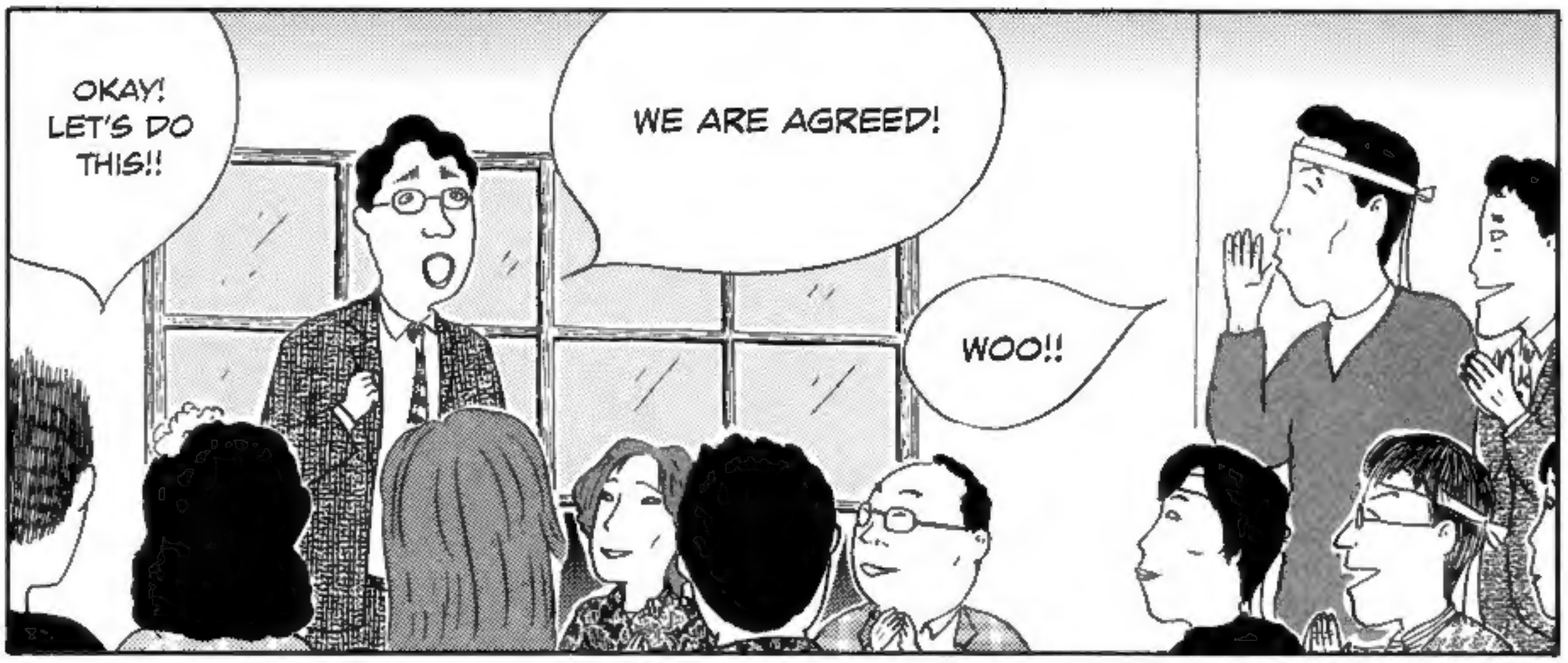
WE CAN JUST GO TO YOYOGI PARK.

BUT THE PEDESTRIAN MALLS OF SHINJUKU ARE LONG GONE.

SO HOW ABOUT IT? DON'T YOU JUST FEEL LIKE GOING OUTSIDE SOMEWHERE AND DANCING WHENEVER BAMBOO SHOOTS ARE IN SEASON?

SAME.
ME TOO.
AND ME.

ME TOO!
I'M GAME!


OKAY! LET'S DO THIS!!
WE ARE AGREED!
WOO!!

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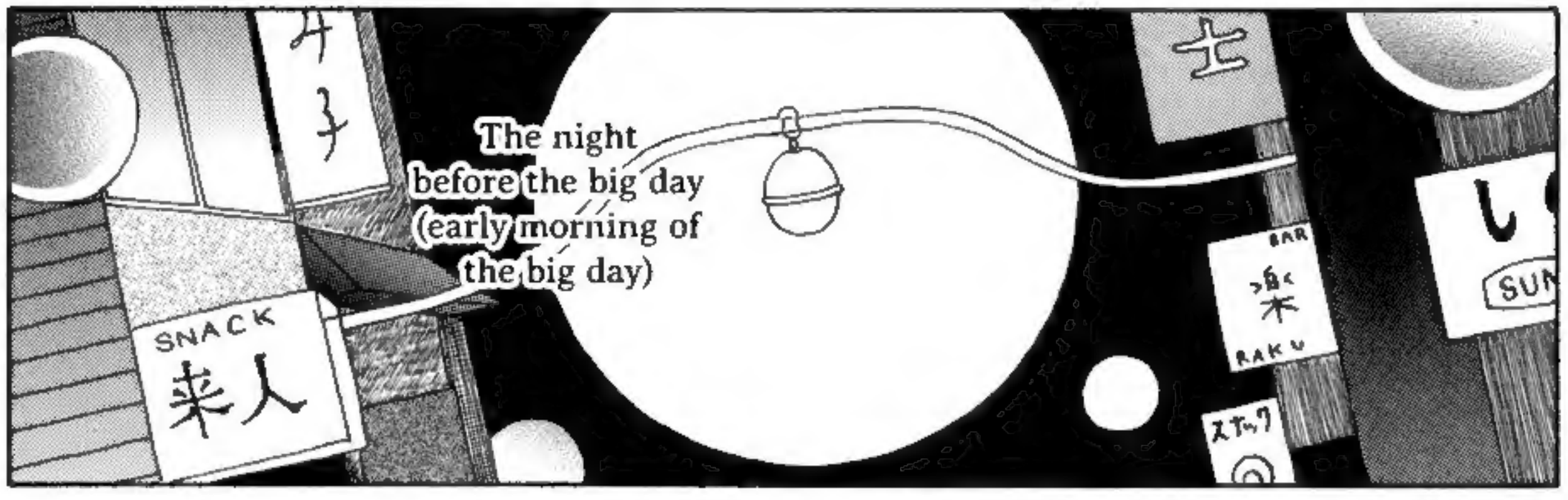
IT SURE HAS BECOME A BIG DEAL, HUH...?

AS A RESULT, IT WAS DECIDED THAT THEY'D GO THROUGH WITH THE PLAN ON THE FIRST DAY OF GOLDEN WEEK.


The night before the big day (early morning of the big day)
SNACK
来人
BAR
RAKU

HORIE-SAN ACTUALLY ARRANGED IT ALL. JUST WHAT YOU'D EXPECT FROM A TRAVEL AGENT.

WOW.

WE'LL ALL BE STAYING IN A HOTEL IN SHINJUKU TONIGHT. IN THE MORNING, WE'LL TAKE A MINIBUS THERE.

INDEED.

WE DID A SPECIAL CRASH COURSE.

OH MY, YOU CAN TELL!? I REALLY TRAINED MYSELF FOR THIS.

KAORU-CHAN, HAVE YOU LOST A LITTLE WEIGHT?

MY WIFE TRIED TO STOP ME, BUT SHE CAN JUST GO EAT SHIT!

SAME HERE.

ME TOO! MY DAUGHTER GAVE ME FUNNY LOOKS, THOUGH.

RIGHT, I'VE BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT THAT.

...BUT WILL THE WEATHER HOLD OUT FOR TOMORROW?

YEAH!!

EVEN IF IT RAINS, WE GO! WE ARE TAKENOKO-ZOKU!

BUT THERE WAS A GREAT STORM THE NEXT DAY, AND, THE DOWNPOUR WAS ESPECIALLY HEAVY FROM NOON ONWARDS.

THEY LEFT EARLY THAT NIGHT TO PREPARE FOR THE BIG EVENT...

Middle-Aged Takenoko-zoku Sprout in Yoyogi Park

DESPITE WHAT THEY SAID, I EXPECTED THEM TO CALL IT OFF DUE TO THE RAIN, BUT THEN I SAW A LITTLE SOMETHING PRINTED IN A TOKYO NEWS-PAPER.

AROUND THE END OF GOLDEN WEEK...

SO YOU REALLY DID IT.

SOME OF US DID SUGGEST TO DO EXACTLY THAT, BUT THEN SASAHARA-SENSEI SPOKE UP.

SINCE THE RAIN WAS LIKE THAT, I WAS SURE YOU'D CALL IT OFF.

IT WAS AWESOME.

SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO LET LOOSE AND ACT THE FOOL. JUST LIKE OLD TIMES.

Masashi

OH, YEAH.

THAT'S MASASHI THE "CHIVALROUS WILD DANCER", ALRIGHT.

HE WAS JUST TOO COOL, THAT SASAHARA-SENSEI.

HE CAME DOWN WITH A FEVER AND IS NOW BEDRIDDEN.

AND WHERE IS SASAHARA-SENSEI?

SO HE REALLY TURNED OUT TO BE A QUACK, EH? HE CAN'T EVEN CURE HIS OWN ILLNESS.

...

HUH...

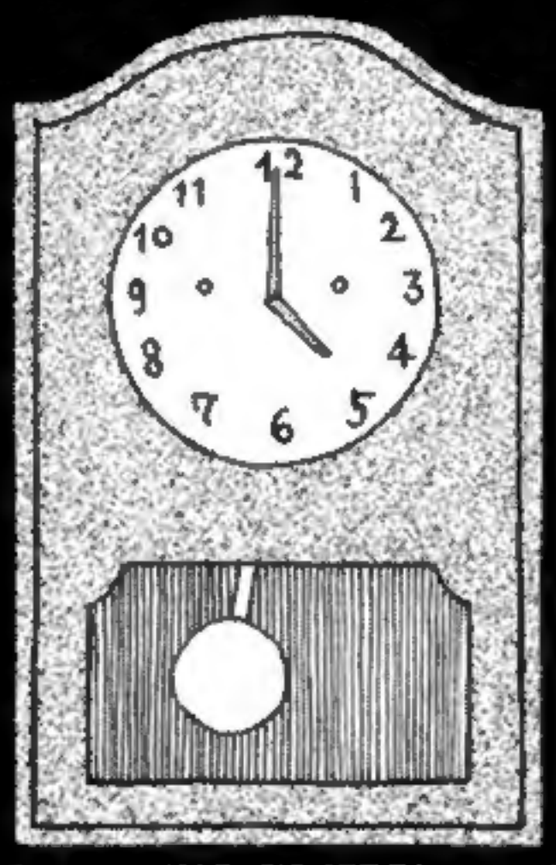
LOOKS LIKE IT!

SFX: HAHAHA

SFX: HAHAHA

THAT DAY, THE ONCE-YOUTHFUL BOYS AND GIRLS OF THE MIDDLE-AGED TAKENOKO-ZOKU ATE EVERY LAST GRAIN OF BAMBOO SHOOT RICE.*

TL.N: "TAKENOKO GOHAN", A FORM OF "TAKIKOMI GOHAN" WHERE INGREDIENTS AND SEASONINGS ARE COOKED TOGETHER WITH RICE. OFTEN MADE WITH SEASONAL INGREDIENTS TO CELEBRATE THE CHANGE IN SEASON.



5 in the morning

Long NOTES

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1) Literally "bamboo shoot tribe." It refers to a subculture that involved groups of young people wearing flashy clothes and dancing in the open. Popularity peaked around 1980. Imagine a benign cross between disco dancers and "bousou-zoku" ("running wild tribe") biker delinquents, where activities revolved around boomboxes instead of motorcycles. Their name is said to come from many members wearing clothes from the "Takenoko Boutique" owned by Ootake Takenori.

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1) Ichinichi Ichizen is an idiom meaning "Do a good deed a day". Ryuuko Bujin is spoken to sound like "Dragon and Tiger Army", but is read as "Dragon and Tiger Dancers". Friends is an irregular usage of kanji phonetically pronounced "furenzu" but read as "Bad Love Group".